

LABOR, WEALTH

risen faster than steam has cheapened luxuries. Discontent, anxiety, care for appearances, desire to impose by display, envy, and mean social ambition characterize the mores, together with energy and enterprise. Envy and discontent are amongst the very strongest traits of modern society. Very often they are only manifestations of irritated vanity. It is in the nature of things that classes of men and forms of property shall go through endless vicissitudes of advantage and disadvantage. Nobody can foresee these and speculate upon them with success. When it is proposed to "reorganize society" on any socialistic theory, or on no theory, it should be noticed that such an enterprise involves a blind speculation on the vicissitudes of classes and forms of property in the future. "Wealth, whether in land or money, has been increased by marriages and inheritances, reduced to fragments by divisions, even in noble families [in spite of settlements and entails], dissipated by prodigals, reconstituted by men of economical habits, centupled by industrious and competent men of enterprise, scattered by the indolent, the unfortunate, and the men of bad judgment, who have risked it unwisely. Political events have affected it as well as the favor of princes, advantageous offices in the state, popular revolts, wars, confiscations, from the abolition of serfdom in the fourteenth century until the abolition, in 1790, of the dues known as feudal, although they were, for the most part, owned by members of the bourgeoisie." * So it will be in the future, in spite of all that men can do. If two men had the same sum of money in 1200, and one bought land while the other became a money lender, anywhere in western Europe, the former would to-

day be more
or less rich according to the position of his land.
He might be
a great millionaire. The other would have
scarcely anything
left.² Shall we then all buy land now? Let
those do so who
can foresee the course of values in the next seven
hundred years.
The popular notion is that nobles have always
owned land. The
truth is that men who have acquired wealth have
bought land
and got themselves ennobled. In France, " in the
seventeenth
and eighteenth centuries, nineteen twentieths of
those who were

¹ D'Avenel *Hist. Econ.*, 142. ² B'Avenel, 397.